

IDENTITY

Identity is defined by Psychology Today as the knowledge of who we are¹. 63% of teens say they "know who they are" while 37% do not fully know their identity yet³. Teens may search for identity in status, work, race, ethnicity, education, family, opinions of others, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, friends, money, power, talent, etc.

Technology and social media may prove finding identity even more confusing and difficult, giving us more possible versions of "self" than ever before to constantly edit⁵, and an endless supply of people to compare ourselves with⁸. We may risk a vicious cycle of seeking constant online approval⁸, causing unhealthy online dependency or a misconception that online identity equals real life⁴. The Bible says our identity is found in God because we're created in His image (Gen. 1:27). Before we were born, He knew us (Jer. 1:5) and had plans written for us (Ps. 139:16). Jesus said we find our true life if we give ours to him (Luke 9:23-25), making us children of God (John 1:12) with a new life (2 Cor. 5:17) and relationship with Him (1 Cor. 6:17) through identity in Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28) and citizenship in our home, heaven (Phil. 3:20).

STATS & QUOTES TO CONSIDER

"Identity is the knowledge of who we are" says Psychology Today.

Imom.com says teens search for identity in a variety of things such as status, family, rebellion, people's opinions, idols, cliques, etc.

Who am I? why am I alive? What's my purpose? What's the meaning of life?

63% of teens say they "know who they are" while 37% do not fully know their identity yet.

Social media allow kids to broadcast everything while connecting them to experiences they might not have encountered a generation ago. But it also opens teens up to exponential ridicule or an amplified feeling of invisibility that can influence the perceptions they have of themselves.

"Kids are always looking at each other, comparing themselves to each other. The same thing that's going on in the halls is going on online," Steiner-Adair said. "The difference for teenagers today is that there's an endless supply of people to whom they can compare themselves."

Experts like Steiner-Adair and Dr. David Greenfield say the fact that many teens view their online and real-time identities as identical can be a recipe for disaster.

"Kids spend a lot of time crafting this identity that you hope people will respond favorably to," Steiner-Adair said. "When they feel desperate for feedback or curious in a risky way, social networking sites play very much on the vulnerability of teens' and preteens' desire to not only know what people think of them but their hopes that they're seen as cool and their hunger for approval."

Technology can also make it more difficult to form an identity. There are more versions of "self" than ever before, which gives kids who may already be struggling to figure out who they are even more to juggle.

The natural urge to seek approval online can create a dependency on the Internet, Greenfield said. Because teens are digital natives, they have a higher likelihood for addiction. He says you can see it in the way teens handle their cellphones.

"The phone is so much more than a way of communicating," Greenfield said. "They would no more be out and about without a phone than they'd go without underwear. It's become part of their identity on a social and cultural level."

Pruning and revising profile content is an important part of teens' online identity management.

- 59% have deleted or edited something that they posted in the past.
- 53% have deleted comments from others on their profile or account.

- 45% have removed their name from photos that have been tagged to identify them.
- 31% have deleted or deactivated an entire profile or account.
- 19% have posted updates, comments, photos, or videos that they later regretted sharing.

The development of identity, or one's sense of self, occurs throughout a lifetime. For teens, thinking about their identity is a first-time event. They are starting to wonder who they are and why. They're curious about the factors (reasons) they are who they are. Teens are also developing a perception of themselves and wondering how others perceive them.

Teens will find themselves acting differently according to the situation and who's with them. This often leads to confusion and questions about who they really are.

Teens work out who they are by trying on new identities and experimenting with different appearances or new interests.

Every teen, including the one in your life, wants to discover their own secret identity.

One of the hardest problems most teens deal with is being judged by others. Feeling accepted matters more to teens than almost anything else.

The shaping of self-identity in teens is one of the most important and most vulnerable processes of our lives. The self-identity that we build during the adolescent years follows us into adulthood, which makes it an extremely critical period of time. Social media could be negatively affecting it, though.

If self-identity in teens is based on how many “likes” you receive on a post, then there’s always going to be someone who has more, and for that person, there’s always going to be someone who has more, and so on. It’s a vicious cycle that makes absolutely no sense.

BIBLE VERSES TO CONSIDER

Genesis 1:27 "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Jeremiah 1:5 ""Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you."

Psalms 139:16 "Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Luke 9:23-25 (Jesus) "Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

John 1:12 "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

1 Corinthians 6:17 "But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit."

Galatians 3:26-28 "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:20 "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

1 John 2:5-6 "By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked"

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 6:6-14 "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace."

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

1 Peter 2:9 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

1 Corinthians 12:27 "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

1 John 3:1 "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies."

Colossians 3:1-4 "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Ephesians 4:22-24 "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

John 15:5 (Jesus) "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Romans 8:14-15 "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

Psalms 139:14 "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

1 Samuel 16:7 "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Romans 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 1:4-5 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he[a] predestined us for adoption to sonship[b] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."

Ephesians 2:19 "You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household."

Psalm 100:3 "Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."

Ephesians 2:4-5 "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Isaiah 64:8 "Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay; you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

Ephesians 5:8 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

1 Peter 3:3-4 "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

Ephesians 2:13 "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Romans 8:16-17 "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

Matthew 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

1 Corinthians 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

Romans 15:7 "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

Romans 8:37 "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

RESOURCES

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